753 /66/ This is because illness is usually attributed to an evil spirit,
761 which must not be irked with complaints. Yet in everyday language it is God who is the cause of everything, of health as well as of death. The sorcerers consulted indicate which spirit must be appeased, to whom sacrifices must be offered; or they state quite frankly that the hour of the sick person has come, that his life is over and he is about to rejoin his ancestors, for it is often the latter who call him and come to fetch him. In the case of old men and especially of old women, death is considered a natural event. An old man has many children who will give him a fine funeral, and it is time for him to make way for his eldest son. If a quarrelsome person falls sick, his
[763] illness is often attributed to an evil spell cast by an enemy. When an elder is about to die, those who have caused him offense come to beg his forgiveness and only find peace when they have obtained it, for the old man might return to obtain his revenge. Sudden death is usually ascribed to poison and, alas, this is often the case. Sometimes it is also attributed to an evil spirit, especially in case of accident, fall, snake bite, etc.

755 The instinct of self-preservation is so strong in man that the Mossi,
757 although they ascribe a superhuman origin to illness, nevertheless fight it. It is true that all their treatments combine medicinal and superstitious elements to drive off evil spirits, and whatever the remedy, true medicine or amulet, it is always a tim; there is only the one
759 word to designate it. Some of the natives know how to treat certain illnesses, and people come to consult them, often from far away. One has a medicine against snakes, and he makes it in complete secrecy on a certain day; one knows how to treat colds and bronchitis;
[754] another, dysentery; yet another, sores. The bone-setters are often very skillful, and with the mere pressure of their fingers they can set a dislocated joint or a broken leg; then they enclose it between tightly-bound millet stalks as a splint. These doctors prescribe remedies without resorting to sacrifices or witchcraft. Sometimes they live with their patient to care for him, of course for a fee, especially if the person gets well.

751 Smallpox vaccination is performed, but often too late, on individuals who already have the germ. The vaccine is taken from a seriously ill person without any precautionary antiseptic measures. The vaccinated individual is usually made very sick and sometimes dies of

751 it. It is recognized that smallpox does not hit the same place twice (obviously, when it has already killed all those who could be killed), and fear of catching the disease prevents many natives from undergoing the operation. The Administration is rendering great services
744 with its vaccination tours, which will be all the more successful since the experiments carried out by our Fathers some years ago, with tubes of vaccine kindly sent by the Administrator of Ouagadougou, bore excellent results and checked an epidemic which was decimating the population. Smallpox victims are nursed /67/ as carefully as possible.
● 757 They are laid on a bed of sand which retains heat. When the pocks are ripe, they are punctured with a thorn, and then the patient is rubbed with sand. The eyes are washed with an antiseptic decoction, and the patient gargles frequently with peppered water.

Medicinal herbs, tree leaves, and barks are the basis of all remedies, in the form of infusions or poultices. The study of these medicines would no doubt be of interest to a specialist. But would the natives who hold the secret of their preparation be willing to surrender it?

[572] When a friend is ill, even if he lives far away, the right thing is to
755 visit him, offer him sympathy, and even more appropriately bring him some gifts. The relatives of the sick person consult the sorcerer, for it is necessary to determine the agency that caused the disease. Sorcerers rarely prescribe a medicine. Their role is to point out the part of the body which is afflicted and especially to indicate the spirit who should receive the sacrifice. Another man, who in most cases has nothing to do with witchcraft, knows the medicines. If the patient improves after the prescribed sacrifices have been offered, it means that the sorcerer knows his business well; if not, it means that he has cheated.

758 Every self-respecting sorcerer must prescribe a negative treatment, in the sense of pointing out certain things the patient must not eat. Sometimes goat or chicken flesh is forbidden for the duration of the illness or permanently. Sometimes it is a certain kind of sauce, or millet or bean fritters. On the other hand, since the Mossi eat no eggs, especially not raw, and drink hardly any milk, they sustain the sick with plenty of millet beer and with an unappetizing mush of coarsely ground millet, often mixed with powdered charcoal. Patients have difficulty absorbing such a mixture and occasionally die of
755 starvation. Sometimes the sorcerer also indicates an amulet that

231 will not take it. The Mossi only eat it themselves if there is no
262 other kind of millet available, or in times of famine. In any case,
[757] the red millet has a constipating effect, and when people suffer
from colic they are given a to /mush/ of red millet to check the
attack.

243 The Mossi also grow the ordinary large white millet, which is the kind grown most extensively, aside from sanio, throughout the Sudan. The Mossi call it baninga, the Bambara kéningué or guessékélé. It is called kéningué around Ségou, and guessékélé around Nioro. The Nounouma call it nienso, and so do the Kassonfra /Awana/. The Kassonboura /Kasena/ call it béninga, that is to say, they have adopted the Mossi word and slightly altered it. (We saw, in fact, that some Kassouna-Boura, at least those of Po and Tiahané, are Kassouna-Mossi rather than Kassouna-Boura.)

Europeans often give this kind of millet the name of "pearly millet" /mil nacré/ or "horse millet," because it is tender and easy to crush.

/470/ This millet is not grown by every Mossi. Those who do
[231] grow the large white millet eat it themselves. They also give it to their horses. It is cultivated exactly in the same fashion as the small millet, that is to say, it is sown and harvested at the same time.

The Mossi also grow the kipéléro or kipélégo (from ki, "millet," and pélero or pélégo, "white"). This is the yaro or yara of the Gourounsi, and probably the n'guéné or n'kendé of the Bambara and Malinké, a kind of millet intermediate between the small and large white varieties. Actually, one of my informants told me that the kipélero is sown along with the ordinary small millet, that no distinction is made between the two, and that they are used for the same purposes, while another informant maintained that it is a kind of large white millet.

The Mossi also grow some gadiaba. This is a kind of large millet which is either white or red. The Bambara call it gadiabadié when it is white, hamadiboubou when it is red. The Mossi refer to the gadiabadié as noira. They cultivate it only in Boussouma province. As for hamadiboubou, it is not to be found among the Mossi.

As far as the early millet /mil précoce/ is concerned, the Mossi are familiar with it and call it nado, but they do not cultivate it. This is the souna of the Bambara, the tiara of the Nounouma and

222 263 These pods, of course, are not eaten. They merely serve to make the tô sauce fresh and sour, as the Blacks like it.

[261] The pods[1] themselves are only eaten in times of famine, because they give colic. In addition, they harm the mouth, tongue, and teeth (gingivitis).

In ordinary times, the natives use them medically as a fever remedy. They boil them with pimento and drink the decoction. This is done by the Mossi as well as by the Gourounsi, Bambara, etc.

Tamarind pods are also made into dry balls which are sold at market. They are crudely mashed with a pestle, and then pressed together in cold water into balls of varying size. Whenever one wishes to give the to a tamarind taste, one pries loose a small piece of the ball with a knife and places it in the canari of boiling water where millet flour will be added.

278 757 Like the Bambara, the Mossi prepare a purging drink with the tamarind pod, either fresh or dried. It is boiled in water, a tiny bit of millet flour is added, and the drink is consumed when slightly warm. This decoction has laxative properties. The Haoussa are also familiar with it, but the Gourounsi are not.

222 137 To summarize, the tamarind pod has two chief uses among the Mossi and other Blacks of West Africa. It serves to sour and freshen the tô, and it also serves as a purgative.

272 Let us add that Dr. Rançon, in the account of his /501/ trip through Upper Gambia, described the preparation of a tamarind drink for European consumption. The pod is left to dissolve in cold water for three hours, sugar is added, and a sort of lemonade results.

222 137 The Mossi have rônier in every village. This, as we know, is a variety of palm tree.

"It is the largest palm tree, Borassus flabelliformis," says Dr. Rançon (Dans la Haute-Gambie, pages 139 to 141). "It is easy to recognize owing to its height and characteristic appearance. Its trunk is very long and may sometimes reach 25 or 30 meters. It is swollen in the middle, and its lower and upper parts are much less thick, much more slender. The bark is blackish and bears scars of the wounds left by fallen leaves. The wood, although it looks spongy, is quite tough and hard to dent with a saw. Rônier logs are heavier than water. This is one of the rare woods that do not float. The leaves of a grown rônier are clustered in a thick bunch at the

[1] [i.e. tamarind pods — Analyst]

789 A number of grigris made by Mossi timisoba have passed
791 through my hands. I shall list them and briefly describe them below.

1. A cow's tail at the tip of a wooden handle. When one is traveling during the winter season and a storm threatens, one need only wave the cow's tail and the storm does not burst. Once in the village, one stops waving it and the rain comes.

2. A hollow koba horn in which tamarind leaves, peanuts, and
● [757] gum have been placed. In case of headache one opens the horn by its small upper lid, takes /592/ a pinch of the mixture, and swallows it. Then one does this again and also rubs a little on the forehead.

3. A small hoe with a chicken's head fastened to the handle. When during a dance one wishes to silence a singer who has been singing too long in order to sing oneself, one grips the hoe and covers the chicken's mouth. The singer is silenced, and in addition one sings perfectly.

4. A small hoe covered with leopardskin at the bend. If one is
[752] bitten by a snake, one cuts off a very small piece of the skin and puts it in a canari full of water. Then one rubs the bite with this water.

5. A deer horn with a fine red cord wrapped around it. Inside the horn there are tiégélara and karité seeds. The opening of the horn is closed with a wad of cotton.

If an enemy comes looking for a fight, one places some of the contents of the horn on a leather bracelet which is slipped on the left wrist. No harm can come to you, and the quarrel will immediately come to an end.

6. A deer horn containing crushed scorpions and pimento. If one wishes to become an indefatigable dancer, one need only rub one's back with the mixture.

7. Leather bracelets with powdered rice inside. People who wear one of those bracelets on the arm can be sure that the stick or sword which their enemy may attempt to use against them will break in his hands.

8. Iron bracelets covered with crocodile skin. Same purpose.

9. Cotton bracelets with honey and salt inside. If your wife
[842] is sterile, it is sufficient to put the bracelet in water in order to make her fertile.

789 10. A deer horn covered with leather and containing millet and
791 pounded-bean flour. On the outside there is a hooked piece of iron.
777